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SUBJECT: EAST JAVA: LOCAL ELECTIONS PROVE ISSUES MATTER TO VOTERS,
EXCEPT IN AREAS WHERE CLERICS ARE STRONG

REF: A. A SURBAYA 56 (JAWA POS AWARDS)

[1](#)B. B SURABAYA 51 (POLITICS IN EAST JAVA'S LARGEST MUSLIM ORGANIZATION)

[1](#)C. C 07 SURABAYA 89 (JAWA POS SURVEY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS)

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This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Based on the results of the most recent nine local elections for Regent in East Java Province, two things are clear. First, poor performance usually dooms incumbents no matter the size of the campaign war chest. Second, in a few more conservative districts, support from Islamic clerics matters more than good policy. If these local elections are any guide, elections in this second most populous Indonesian province are increasingly reflecting voter's democratic aspirations. While Gus Dur's National Awakening Party (PKB) remains strong where clerics are most influential, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) showed strength in all other areas.

Jawa Pos--Polling Voter Satisfaction

[1](#)2. (SBU) Each year, the Jawa Pos Pro-Autonomy Institute (JPIP) ranks public perception of government performance in 38 East Java regencies and cities based on public opinion surveys (Ref A). When these rankings are compared with recent election results, it is clear that government performance, has an influence on voter choice, although it is mitigated by other factors, particularly in religiously conservative regions. Voter satisfaction with performance in the areas of Health, Political Participation, Administration, and Accountability seemed most strongly linked to election success. Performance in the areas of Education and Economic Growth appeared less directly linked. In all six of the districts where challengers won, government performance was weakest in the categories of Political Participation, Health, Administration, and Accountability. High rankings in Education and Economic Growth did not save these incumbents. Government performance in two of the districts where an incumbent won had high ranks in Political Participation, and to a lesser extent, Administration. Education and Economic Growth rankings varied widely between these districts.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The incumbent won in only three out of nine recent regency elections. In two of these regencies (Probolinggo and Tulung Agung), the districts had average JPIP rankings and the winning incumbent enjoyed broad political support. In the other

case (Bangkalan), the district had very low JPIP rankings, but the incumbent still won with 80.79% of the vote. JPIP rankings were very low in three of the six regencies won by a challenger (Nganjuk, Bojonegoro, and Sampang). The challenger also won in Magetan, where the regent's performance was mid-ranked (20 out of 38). The anomaly is Pasuruan, which boasted an incumbent with broad political support and placed second in overall JPIP rankings.

PKB and PDI-P

14. (SBU) In religiously conservative districts, Muslim clerics (Kiai) continue their strong influence on local voters (Ref B). Kiai are highly respected Islamic leaders and teachers who are especially influential in the 'Tapal Kuda' or 'horseshoe-shaped' coastline surrounding East Java's Madura Sea. Two Kiai won elections on the island of Madura -- the incumbent in Bangkalan, and a challenger in Pamekasan. This probably explains why Bangkalan's incumbent was re-elected despite rock-bottom Jawa Pos rankings and the challenger in Pamekasan defeated an incumbent whose programs won awards from JPIP. Conversely, candidates with strong Kiai support but low JPIP rankings lost in Bojonegoro and Nganjuk. Both are regencies outside the Tapal Kuda region where Kiai influence is weaker.

15. (SBU) Two major national parties seem to have divided voters in the province -- PDI-P and PKB. Candidates supported by the Kiai-linked National Awakening Party (PKB) were most successful in the Tapal Kuda region. PKB was created by former Indonesian President Gus Dur as a political outlet for members of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia. PKB success in the Tapal Kuda region indicates that it still wields power where Kiai influence remains strong. However PKB's inability to win outside of Tapal Kuda may indicate that the growing disunity within PKB has hurt it in the province more broadly, perhaps irreparably.

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16. (SBU) Outside of Tapal Kuda, PDI-P dominated, winning three out of three races. In Kiai-dominant district of Pasuruan, the PDI-P candidate defeated the well-regarded incumbent supported by Golkar and the National Mandate Party (PAN) and a second candidate supported by PKB, the Democratic Party and Gus Dur. The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) allied itself with two of the victorious PDI-P candidates (including in Pasuruan), suggesting that NU members' traditional distrust of PKS may be waning.

MCCLELLAND